TOP

7		The Resurrection, Apparitions and Ascension of Christ	282
		The tomb found empty	283
		Apparitions of Christ in Judaea	286
		Apparitions of Christ in Galilee	298
		The Last Appearance in Jerusalem. The Ascension	303
Epilogue		The Gospel of Jesus Christ, God And Man	306
		Jesus of Nazareth, Martyr For Religious Truth	306
		Jesus The Son of God, God Like His Father	319
		The Word Of St. John And The Living Gospel	335

CHAPTER VII

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THE RESURRECTION, APPARITIONS, AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST

None of the evangelists has told us a single word of the actual resurrection of Jesus. A great artist, Francois Rude, has carved Napoleon in stone rising from the bed of his tomb and awakening to glory; but the gospels have made no attempt to picture how Christ's bruised and wounded body thrilled once more at the touch of His soul. That human body of His, by which the Son of God had subjected Himself to the law of suffering, was now transfigured by glorious beatitude, while the Father's voice declared in His eternal day: 'Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee,' and the Son gave thanks to His Father for having given Him the nations for an inheritance. All these things transcend the power of human words to describe and remain hidden in the secret counsels of God.

This discretion manifested by the evangelists is certainly a strong recommendation of the value of their testimony. They bore witness to what was seen upon earth : first that the tomb was found empty, then that Christ was seen alive with a body that shared the glory of His soul, but truly His own body. They do not tell us where His soul had been in the meantime, while it was separated from that most sacred body. But the first epistle of St. Peter gives us an indication—and Christ's words to the good thief already gave us an inkling of it—when it says that Jesus had gone to preach ' to those spirits that were in prison '.

19 in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, 1 Peter 3:19.

Tradition expresses this as the descent of Christ into hell, meaning by hell the abode of the dead where the just men of old awaited the blessing of redemption. Afterwards His soul rejoined His body, and that body, now animated by a more perfect life than before, was enabled to come forth from the tomb without breaking the seals fixed there by His now powerless enemies, after the manner in which, (Page 283) as a child, He had come forth from His Mother's womb.'

This comparison is often drawn by the Fathers.

Yet it was only fitting that the empty tomb should not remain closed, and St. Matthew tells us that an angel of the Lord shook the earth and rolled away the stone on which he sat in triumph: ' His countenance was as lightning and his raiment white as snow.' At that sound the guards awoke; at that sight they trembled with terror and, though motionless at first with astonishment, took to flight.

The tomb found empty (306-310).

24 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices which they had prepared. 2 And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, 3 but when they went in they did not find the body.[a] 4 While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel; 5 and as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.[b] 6 Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, 7 that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise." 8 And they remembered his words, 9 and returning from the tomb they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. 10 Now it was Mary Mag′dalene and Jo-an′na and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told this to the apostles; 11 but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. 12 But Peter rose

and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home wondering at what had happened.[c] Luke 24: 1-12;

16 And when the sabbath was past, Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him.[a] **2** And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. **3** And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" **4** And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back; for it was very large. **5** And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed. **6** And he said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you." **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid. Mark 16: 1-8;

28 [a]Now after the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Mag'dalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre. **2** And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone, and sat upon it. **3** His appearance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. **4** And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. **5** But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. **6** He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he[b] lay. **7** Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you." **8** So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Matt.28: 1-8;

20 Now on the first day of the week Mary Mag'dalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. **2** So she ran, and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." **3** Peter then came out with the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. **4** They both ran, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first; **5** and stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; he saw the linen cloths lying, **7** and the napkin, which had been on his head, not lying with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. **8** Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; **9** for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise from the dead. **10** Then the disciples went back to their homes. John 20: l-10.

The four evangelists relate, each in his own way, how the tomb of Jesus was found empty, to the great astonishment of Christ's friends. St. Matthew and St. Mark are the most alike. St. Luke is usually closer to St. Mark. As for St. John, he goes his own way, put is in agreement with St. Luke concerning the search made by.St. Peter. The difficulty of harmonizing the four accounts has been greatly exaggerated. Nothing is more simple provided we do not stick at unimportant details, provided also we pay attention to the way in which each gospel was composed.

The Sabbath had ended at sunset on Saturday evening, and with it the prescribed rest of the day of the Pasch. The feast lasted eight days, but only the first and last were days of rest.

8 but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be.
Deuteronomy 15: 8

However the women devoted to Jesus did not leave the house where they were probably together until the next morning, but they went out very early. According to St. Mark, they were Mary of Magdala, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. Instead of Salome St. Luke names Joanna, of whom he alone has told us ;

3 and Jo-an'na, the wife of Chu'za, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them[a] out of their means. Luke 8:3

whilst St. Matthew only mentions Mary of Magdala and the other Mary. None of the evangelists intended to mention all the women there; each followed his own information without seeking to be in harmony with the others. But it will be observed that Mary of Magdala always heads the list. St. John speaks only of her.

To restore the harmony of events we need only suppose that Mary Magdalen, the most eager of all the group, went (Page 284) straight to the tomb. The other women, according to St, Luke, would appear to have already had spices and perfumed oil ready since Friday evening. But is it likely that they would have had a store of these in their temporary lodging? Probably St. Luke has, in accordance with his method,

Cf 3, 20; 22: 19, f

dealt at once with all that concerned the burial and thus anticipated what St. Mark has placed after the Sabbath, that is, the purchase of the spices. We may well imagine that the women, who had gone out very early when it was still dark, would have lost a great deal of time in getting the shops opened to buy these spices ; and so, according to St. Mark, they did not arrive within sight of the sepulcher until after sunrise. Magdalen must have preceded them, since it was still nearly dark when she discovered that the stone had been taken away, in other words, rolled back so that the tomb was open.

The guards had disappeared, but she was not surprised at that, for she did not know they had been posted there. By peeping within she saw that the body had disappeared, but she saw no angel, for Jesus intended to tell her Himself. In her extreme anxiety, dreading the thought of some profanation of the adorable body of Jesus, she immediately set off to run back, going straight to Simon Peter and the disciple whom Jesus loved. Quite beside herself, she did not hesitate to declare : ‘They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulcher, and we know not where they have laid Him.’ She says ‘ we,’ ascribing her conviction also to the women who had started out with her, but who only at that moment were arriving at the tomb.

These women had gone to the tomb at the bidding of their generous hearts, only realizing the difficulty that lay before them as they went along. They knew nothing about the guards. How were they to get into the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus? The heavy mill-stone which closed the entrance would be an insuperable obstacle, for they were not strong enough to roll it back ; even a man would need a crow-bar, but they had no hopes of finding a willing helper at that early hour. Such were the anxious thoughts they exchanged when they arrived and found the stone already rolled away. Their joy was great, for the stone ‘was very large.’ They therefore entered the tomb and found the body was gone. Deep was their astonishment. (Page 285) So it was not the disciples who had rolled back the stoney for they would not have profaned the body by disturbing the sacred rest of the dead. Then they saw a young man seated on their right upon the stone ledge,

(According to Matthew, whose account is very brief, it might be thought that the angel who had rolled back the stone was still sitting upon it. In Luke the distinction between the discovery that the tomb was empty and the apparition of the angel is made clearer than in Mark. Luke mentions two men clothed in shining raiment who both speak, which can only mean that one spoke for both.)

clothed in a white garment. They cast their eyes to the ground in fear. The young man said : ‘ Be not affrighted. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified; He is risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go and tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him, as He told you.’

6 And he said to them, “Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him, as he told you.” **8** And they went out and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid. Mark 16: 6 f. Luke does not mention this meeting-place, having decided to relate only appearances in Judea.

According to St. Mark, the holy women fled and said nothing to anybody, so frightened were they. After all, that is quite natural: and they must have feared they would not be believed. No doubt they thought better of it, for St. Luke and St. Matthew relate very briefly that they gave their message to the Apostles; all that must have taken some time and have been accompanied by certain incidents.

St. Mark, who excels in relating the unexpected, would have given us information about this, had not the thread of his discourse been broken at that very point. When his gospel was finished, whether by him or someone else,

Fillion (III, p. 515) says of the end of St. Mark : ‘ Whoever may have been the author of it.’

the gap was not filled up.

The Apostles might have thought they would be demeaning themselves if they gave credence to women’s gossip. However, St. Luke tells us how Peter, who had to be informed first for he was still the leader, ran to the tomb which he found empty: he saw nothing but the linen cloths, a fact which made him think.

Luke does not say that the women spoke to all the Apostles immediately; that would moreover be against all probability.

This incident St. John has related in detail, for he himself took part in that anxious search, describing himself as the ‘other disciple whom Jesus loved.’ Peter and he were probably together when Mary of Magdala brought them the disastrous news of the removal of the body. They set out at once, and in their great excitement, they both ran. (Page 286) John, the younger, ran faster than Peter and therefore reached the sepulcher first. But he did not enter, surely out of respect for his companion. He merely stooped and, looking beyond the little antechamber, saw the linen cloths lying there. Peter, who followed him, entered boldly into the tomb itself. He, too, saw the cloths and saw them more plainly ; their presence was proof that the body had not been removed, for it would have been taken clothed as it was. And a still more surprising thing was this: the linen that had been put round the head was not lying untidily among the cloths, but folded up and laid aside by itself, The other disciple entered and saw the same thing. Both of them, startled and thoughtful, were silent and said nothing to one another of what they thought. St. John only says that from this time he believed that Jesus had risen again, and this was surely St. Peter’s conviction too, up to that moment they had not understood from the Scriptures that Christ was to rise again, though He Himself had foretold it to all His Apostles. But the occurrence seemed to them so improbable that only the obvious fact had the power to convince them, and then it dawned upon them that this was the predicted fulfillment of the Messiah’s final consecration.

2
For he grew up before him like a young plant,
  and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,
  and no beauty that we should desire him. Isaiah 53:2

Apparitions of Christ in Judea (311-316).

The Walk to Emmaus

13 That very day two of them were going to a village named Emma'us, about seven miles[d] from Jerusalem, **14** and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. **15** While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. **16** But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. **17** And he said to them, “What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. **18** Then one of them, named Cle'opas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” **19** And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, **20** and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. **21** But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened. **22** Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning **23** and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. **24** Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see.” **25** And he said to them, “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” **27** And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

28 So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further, **29** but they constrained him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. **30** When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them. **31** And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight. **32** They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?” **33** And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them, **34** who said, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” **35** Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

36 As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you.”[e] **37** But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. **38** And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts?[f] **39** See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.” **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet.[g] **41** And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate before them.

Luke 24: 13-43

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

9 Now when he rose early on the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Mag'dalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons. **10** She went out and told those who had been with him, as they mourned and wept. **11** But when they heard that he was alive and had been seen by her, they would not believe it.

Jesus Appears to Two Disciples

12 After this he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking into the country. **13** And they went back and told the rest, but they did not believe them.

Jesus Commissions the Disciples

14 Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. Mark 16: 9- 14

9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Hail!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. **10** Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

The Report of the Guard

11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. **12** And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sum of money to the soldiers **13** and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ **14** And if this comes to the governor’s ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.” **15** So they took the money and did as they were directed; and this story has been spread among the Jews to this day. Matt. 28: 9-15

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

11 But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb; **12** and she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. **13** They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him.” **14** Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. **15** Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek?” Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, “Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away.” **16** Jesus said to her, “Mary.” She turned and said to him in Hebrew, “Rab-bo'ni!” (which means Teacher). **17** Jesus said to her, “Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”[a] **18** Mary Mag'dalene went and said to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord”; and she told them that he had said these things to her.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

19 On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.” **20** When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. **21** Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you.” **22** And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. **23** If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

Jesus and Thomas

24 Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

26 Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, “Peace be with you.” **27** Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing.” **28** Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” **29** Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” John 20: 11-29.

Pious children of the Church entertain no doubt that the newly risen Saviour appeared first of all to His most holy Mother. She had fed Him at her breast, she had guided Him in His childhood’s years, she had, so to say, introduced Him to the world at the marriage feast of Cana, and beyond that she hardly appears again in the gospel until she stands at the foot of the cross. But to her alone with Joseph Jesus had devoted the thirty years of His hidden life, and would He not have reserved for her alone also the first moments of His new life that was hidden in God? That was no concern of the gospel’s spread through the world, for Mary belongs to an order that transcends this world, an order where as the Mother of Jesus she is associated (Page 287) with the Father in His paternity of Jesus. Let us therefore submit ourselves to that disposition of things which has been willed by the Holy Ghost, and leave this first appearance of the risen Christ to be meditated on by contemplative souls. We may be sure that it had none of those features, which appeal so much to our emotions, found in Christ's manifestation of Himself to Mary of Magdala.

The two disciples most beloved of the Lord had now returned home, as one of them informs us; but Mary Magdalen did not go away. She had been the last to leave the cross and the sepulcher ; she was the first to come back to the tomb which she had found empty. Now she could not tear herself away from it, but stayed outside and wept. After a while she determined to look again and, entering the antechamber of the tomb, she stooped and peered into the burial chamber as though she might have gathered some information from this fresh glance. It was then that she saw two angels clothed in white, seated one at the head and the other at the foot of the rock shelf on which the body of Jesus had been laid.

Jewish rock tombs discovered near the Dominican Priory of St. Stephen at Jerusalem have a stone rest for the head on the shelf made to receive the corpse.

They said to her: ‘Woman, why weepest thou?’ She failed to recognize that they were angels, for would not angels have known why she was weeping? She replied, therefore: ‘Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him.’ She does not catch sight of the burial garments, nor does she feel alarm at seeing these strangers; at present, all is emptiness and nothingness for her. She stoops again, this time in order to leave the tomb and go elsewhere to seek Jesus. Then she perceives Him, but without recognizing Him or even paying attention to Him, for she is thinking only of that beloved body which she desires to anoint with precious oil, and which she fears is now in profane hands. Jesus says to her: ‘Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?’ Under the impression that He is the guardian of the place, someone she does not know, perhaps one who does not believe in Jesus, and that He must know what has happened to the body of her Lord and consequently ought to understand her distress, she says to Him : “If thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.’ (Page 288) It is hardly surprising that she set out to come to the sepulcher without giving a thought to the stone which closed it, for all her thoughts and desires are concentrated on Jesus and on Him alone. She is determined to find Him. Then she hears the voice that goes straight to her heart and takes the veil from her eyes, addressing her by her familiar name in her own mother tongue: ‘Miriam!’ Straightway she returns the cry: ‘ Rabbouni! My Master!’ and Magdalen is at the feet of Jesus, still weeping, but now for very joy. Now she is in the place of her desire, where she desires to remain so that she may continue to pour out her love. But this was not the time for the sinner to shed tears on the Saviour’s feet. Jesus now belonged to the world above, and although He had not yet ascended to His Father, that would take place before long and it was necessary that He should warn His disciples of the fact. This is apparently the meaning of the words: ‘Do not touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to My Father, but go to My brethren and say to them: I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.’ At that moment Mary Magdalen was consecrated to the office of Apostle of the Apostles. She obeys, like those who tear themselves from converse with their Master in order to go and announce the good tidings, and tells the Apostles: ‘I have seen the Lord.’ But they would not believe her.

John’s narrative is summed up in one sentence by Mark (16: 9-11), who expressly says that Jesus appeared first to Magdalen from whom He had cast seven devils. We are of opinion that Matthew (28: 9- 10) is alluding to the same apparition when he speaks of the women. He uses the same method here as he used in speaking of the demoniacs at Gerasa and the blind men at Jericho, i.e. the Magdalen was one of the group of women, and he summarily applies to them all what was applicable to her.

We do not even learn that any of the disciples, apart from Peter and John, showed any eagerness to verify what the women had said.

Other witnesses of the empty tomb were the guards, who fled when the stone was rolled away. There were not many of them, three or four at the most, and they were not a little bewildered by their experience. When day broke and the city had resumed its daily life the unfortunate men could no longer escape the duty of reporting the event. It was the priests from whom they had received their commission, and it was to the priests that they went to report. The position was embarrassing. Even if the guards had been lacking in vigilance, there was no question of their sincerity ; it could (Page 289) not be supposed that these Roman soldiers had been spirited out of the way. To punish them would be to provoke protests on their part. What could they have done in face of supernatural intervention? In protesting thus the soldiers would merely have spread abroad the rumor that the Jewish leaders precisely wished to prevent, and such a rumor would be considered no mere conjecture since it was based on evidence provided by the guards. Therefore it seemed the most prudent course to persuade them to say that they had seen nothing, for the only plausible hypothesis - open to adoption by the enemies of Jesus was that His disciples had removed the body. A number of the members of the Sanhedrin came to the decision that money should be given to the guards in order to induce them to spread this story in their own name. If Pilate showed any inclination to hold an enquiry and punish the offenders, it would be possible to pacify him, since he had left the matter in the hands of the priests. But it was obvious that the guards could not affirm that they had seen the disciples taking away the body while they themselves were asleep. They would have to admit that they had fallen asleep and that the disciples had taken advantage of their neglect, for none but the disciples could have done the deed. Such was doubtless the solution adopted by many of the Jews when hard pressed about the disappearance of the body of Christ.

At Jerusalem the second day of the Paschal festival was spent in general rejoicing ; in the midst of this the disciples alone remained sorrowful, for they did not dare to believe what they looked on as idle tales of the holy women. Two of them made up their minds to return home to their native village ; all their hopes were dashed, for although one or two disciples had tried to verify the women's report and had indeed found the tomb empty, yet the Master Himself they had not seen at all. And what sort of state would the body be in after three days? We know from St. Luke that one of these two was named Cleophas, and that they were making for the village of Emmaus which was about sixty stades (or furlongs) from Jerusalem, There is nothing new, regarding the problem of Emmaus, to be added to what we wrote in our commentary on St. Luke, where we preferred the reading '160 stades.' In the Revue Biblique, 1925, pp. 347 ff., Pére Abel has satisfactorily shown the probability that, in the itinerary of the Pilgrim of Bordeaux (written in 333), it is assumed that Jerusalem is 160 stades from Emmaus of the Machabean country. The geographer Ptolemy (second century A.D.) makes the distance 150 stades ; but he is relying on a small map, and its editor declares that the stations marked upon it are *parum apte disposite*. As a matter of fact, the map gives 18 miles from Lydda to Emmaus, and 20 from Emmaus to Jerusalem! But in showing that the number of 160 stades is arrived at by going from Jerusalem to Emmaus by Beth-horon, Pére Abel has done no more than explain how it is possible that the 60 stades of Luke 24: 13 were corrected to 160 at the time when the road through Beth-horon was made, probably during the time of Trajan. He points out that the direct route, which is the ancient route, measures 144 stades. Even before that route was made into a carriage road, no pedestrian would ever have dreamed of going to Emmaus by way of Beth-horon. In St. Luke's time, therefore, the road to Emmaus was not 160 stades but 144. Moreover, the evangelist, who gives the name πόλις, even to the smallest villages, would never have used κωμη to describe Emmaus-Nicopolis, one of the fortified cities of Judea. Our map shows this Emmaus, the Emmaus of the Machabees, to-day called Amwas by the Palestinian Arabs. As to the position of the gospel Emmaus, we can make no suggestion that has any appearance of certitude.

Whilst they were (Page 290) talking sadly together, discussing the terrible incidents of the past few days, suddenly Jesus appeared alongside them as though He were a traveler wishing to join them since He was walking in the same direction. They did not recognize Him; even His voice seemed that of a stranger, the more especially as He enquired what was the matter they were discussing. Surely, thought they, He must be the only pilgrim at Jerusalem who had failed to hear of the great event: how Jesus of Nazareth had gained the reputation of a prophet mighty in word and deed, and how the chief priests and magistrates had delivered Him up to be condemned to death, and thus had caused Him to be crucified. It was already the third day since these things had taken place. Moreover, certain women belonging to the group of those who believed in Jesus had found His tomb empty and declared that they had seen a vision of angels who told them that He was alive. But the disciples, who alone could be accepted as serious witnesses, had not seen Him. The two pilgrims apparently know nothing of Christ's appearance to Magdalen, or else they refuse to give any credit to her story.

Jesus allowed them to talk on without saying to them: ‘It is I’, preferring to teach them once more that lesson in face of which His friends had always been reluctant to believe. Was it not necessary— and the Scriptures bore witness to it— that the Christ should suffer before entering into His glory? That truth followed especially from the prophecy of Isaias concerning the suffering servant of Jahweh,

53

Who has believed what we have heard?

And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

2

For he grew up before him like a young plant,

and like a root out of dry ground;

he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him,

and no beauty that we should desire him.

3

He was despised and rejected[a] by men;

a man of sorrows,[b] and acquainted with grief;[c]

and as one from whom men hide their faces

he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

4

Surely he has borne our griefs[d]

and carried our sorrows;[e]

yet we esteemed him stricken,

smitten by God, and afflicted.

5

But he was wounded for our transgressions,

he was bruised for our iniquities;

upon him was the chastisement that made us whole,

and with his stripes we are healed.

6

All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned every one to his own way;

and the Lord has laid on him

the iniquity of us all.[f]

7

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,

yet he opened not his mouth;

like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,

and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb,

so he opened not his mouth.

8

By oppression and judgment he was taken away;

and as for his generation, who considered

that he was cut off out of the land of the living,

stricken for the transgression of my people?

9

And they made his grave with the wicked

and with a rich man in his death,

although he had done no violence,

and there was no deceit in his mouth.

10

Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him;

he has put him to grief;[g]

when he makes himself[h] an offering for sin,
  he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;

11

  he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
  make many to be accounted righteous;
  and he shall bear their iniquities.

12

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great,
  and he shall divide the spoil with the strong;
because he poured out his soul to death,
  and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
  and made intercession for the transgressors.

Isaias 53

but the risen Christ deigned to explain to them (Page 291) all the Scriptures which spoke of Him, both in the Law of Moses and in the Prophets. By this time they had approached the village to which the two disciples were directing their steps. Jesus kept straight ahead without seeming to observe that they were preparing to take a path leading off the high road. But the charitable pair, enraptured by this explanation of the Scriptures which had opened up a new world for them, were unwilling so soon to lose such a companion. They must have been walking for more than three hours and the day was drawing in. Why should He not spend the night with them? Naturally they make the most of the lateness of the hour, but at any rate it must have been at least three o’clock in the afternoon. They brought their guest in and the evening meal was prepared, whereupon He reclined with them at the table. Then Jesus, whose striking air of authority they had already perceived, took bread into His hands, uttered a blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to them. Their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; but immediately He vanished. Then they said to one another: ‘ Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scripture?'

Many have thought that their hearts were burning most of all because they had eaten bread that had been changed into the Body of the Lord; but there is nothing to show that Christ spoke on this occasion the words of consecration. He was only taking ordinary food with His disciples. Why should such a privilege have been granted to these two who, not being of the Twelve, had not been initiated with them into the deed performed by Jesus during the Last Supper? Had their eyes been opened while they were eating, St. Luke would not have told us that they recognized Jesus at the breaking of bread, and consequently before they began to eat. Hence we are not to take this expression to mean the Eucharist.

It would seem that the two disciples, at first startled and then carried away by joy, did not even stop to finish their meal. They must spread the good news as quickly as possible. It was the beginning of a new gospel. Returning to Jerusalem, they found the eleven Apostles reunited along with a few companions, these also under the influence of strong emotion. Before the two new arrivals had time to speak the apostles explained why they were gathered together at so late (Page 292) an hour: ' The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon.' It was right that the chief of the Apostles, Simon Peter, should be the first of the disciples to behold Him who was the Master of them all. St. Paul, too, remarked on this.

1 Corinthians 15: 5: 'He appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve' —the latter being the usual word for the Apostolic council. Luke, who was a historian, wrote 'eleven' because of Judas who had been struck off the list of the Apostles, and did not concern himself about the fact that Thomas also was not present.

The fact provided proof that Peter's denials of his Master had been pardoned, his position of pre-eminence maintained and thus consecrated. Cleophas and his companion narrated their experience and told how they had recognized the Lord in the breaking of bread.

The great day of the Resurrection was now drawing to a close, but before it ended Jesus manifested Himself to that faithful group, now all impatience to feast their eyes on Him. Yet when they suddenly saw Him in the midst of them before they had heard any knocking on the doors, which were shut fast for fear of the Jews, their first movement was an emotion of holy fear. They recognized Jesus, but thought that they were seeing a spirit. Then He said to them: ‘ Why are you troubled ? Peace be to you!’ at the same time showing them His hands and feet which had been nailed to the cross, and His side pierced with the lance.

Luke and John complete each other without any forced harmonization.

St. Luke, a physician and a good psychologist, who knew the value of material details, adds that excess of joy disturbed their powers of judgment, doubtless because they were afraid lest they might be deceiving themselves into believing that they were actually seeing what they so much desired to see. But Our Lord knew that better than St. Luke, and He now used the most familiar of the ordinary realities of daily life in order to calm and enlighten their minds. He asked them if they had anything they could give Him to eat, and before their eyes He ate a little broiled fish ; not that He was restored to the normal life of growth and decline, but solely in order to prove to them the reality of His resurrection.

Having thus been fully convinced and restored to themselves, they stood awaiting some fresh word from their Master. Then they heard Him say again: ‘ Peace be to you,’ and this time peace was already regained. Following that came the mission, the majestic command that threw (Page 293) the world open to them: ‘As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you,’ and He breathed upon them, saying: ‘Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained.’ This is not the great manifestation of the Spirit that He had promised them on the evening of the Last Supper

This is not said merely because Luke gives another account of the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, but also because John himself regards that solemn sending of the Spirit as a gift sent by the Son after He has ascended to His Father, sent both to console His friends in His absence and to strengthen them (14: 16-26; 16: 7-13).

that will come in due time; but now, immediately after His resurrection, He is forming them into a spiritual government. From henceforth they have authority over the souls of men, an authority that will be especially exercised in forgiving their sins, in God’s name, of course, or else in refusing to forgive owing to the bad dispositions of the sinner; for where there is sincere repentance God always forgives. Those who are to be the dispensers of this divine pardon must be the judges of the cases proposed; hence they must be informed of these cases. Therefore the Church has rightly seen in this action of Christ, and in these memorable words, the institution of the Sacrament of Penance.

Now that He was risen Jesus was no longer to live with His disciples as in former days; His appearances were to be merely exceptional. Neither St. John, nor on this occasion St. Luke, found any need to say that He vanished after His manifestation on the Sunday of the Resurrection. That great day has become the real Paschal festival for the Christian faithful.

Thomas, one of the Apostles, was not present with the rest that evening. In all probability he had been summoned like the others after Christ's appearance to Peter, but it seems that he thought fit not to come because he did not believe Peter any more than the others had believed the women. He even refused to give credence to the witness of all his brethren.

Our own age is not much disposed to believe in miracles ; not that it is any the less credulous for that, particularly when things are put forward in the name of 'Science.' Renan showed his cleverness in asserting, as though it were a fact, that he had seen for himself in the East that Orientals are always on the watch for the intervention of the super- (Page 294) natural and ready to believe it with eagerness. But the fact is that the Jews were no more of that disposition in the time of Our Lord than they are in our own day. From the sublime heights to which they had relegated God, transcendent in all His majesty, they did not allow Him to interfere with things mundane except to keep the world in its regular course. Thus during the whole life of Jesus the Apostles seemed little susceptible to things of the supernatural order. They had expected, of course, the great manifestation of the Messiah, and it had not come. The Passion, the very notion of which they rejected, had unsettled in their confidence; and as they had failed to understand the words of Jesus on this point, the glorious triumph of the Resurrection had not been looked for. After they had been convinced by the event itself Thomas still refused to yield. The disciples, he thought, had surely been the victims of an hallucination; all they had seen was a ghost, And when they objected that they had seen the wounds of the Crucified, he replied that in a matter like that it was not enough to see: you must touch. And for that he would trust nobody but himself: 'Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.'

Let us learn to be as gentle with doubters as Christ was. First He left Thomas to his obstinate denials for seven days. The Apostles had seen Christ in Jerusalem and were in no hurry to return to Galilee. They met together again on the eighth day, perhaps for a last prayer together, perhaps to arrange for the journey to Galilee. The doors were shut, when suddenly Jesus stood again in their midst: ‘ Peace be to you!’ Then He said to Thomas: ‘ Put in thy finger here and see my hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into my side; and be not faithless, but believing. ’Did Thomas allow Christ to take his hand and guide it to the wound in His side, or did he abandon his logic and surrender to the evidence of his senses? From him, the unbeliever, came the first explicit act of faith in the divinity of the risen Christ when he cried out: ‘ My Lord and my God!’ To that Jesus replied with a smile of forgiveness: ‘Thou believest now that thou hast seen? That was not very surprising or praiseworthy. Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed! (Page 295)

This was precisely where Thomas had been at fault. He had gone too far in refusing to believe in his Master’s resurrection on the evidence of his brethren whose sincerity he already knew. Jesus pointed this out. Thomas had wanted to see the body of his risen Lord with his own eyes; when once he had seen it, there was no longer any need for him to rely upon others for the truth of the Resurrection. But, as St. Gregory has so well pointed out, when he saw the glorified Humanity he believed in the Divinity of Christ, and that is the real act of faith. That act required then, as it requires now, an assent of the mind to a truth revealed by Christ Himself, and consequently by God. Such an assent was easier for the Apostles, because what Jesus had affirmed was confirmed by His resurrection. Nevertheless, they were more blessed in believing in His Divinity than in enjoying the visible presence of His Humanity. That happy blessedness, which is a foretaste of eternal beatitude, is also the portion of those who believe without having experienced the consolation enjoyed by the Apostles. Moreover, that promise of Christ must never be forgotten, in which He assured us that we shall never lack His presence within us, where He is joined by the Father and the Holy Ghost,

23 Jesus answered him, “If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.
17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you.
John 14: 23, 17.

a presence which makes faith easier and sweeter.

Before leaving Jerusalem with the Apostles, let us first observe that the gospel accounts of the Resurrection present no difficulty except for those reluctant to accept the very fact of the Resurrection, a reluctance already manifested by Thomas. The testimonies to that fact are in an excellent position: not only do they agree about the fact, but also about all the important points concerning it, though each of the different testimonies shows appreciable differences which prove that the authors of the different accounts each followed his own plan, without any preoccupation about not deviating from the other accounts, and still more without any dependence on them. Here even St. Luke, who is usually so faithful to St. Mark, shows complete independence. The comings and goings during the visits to the empty tomb, the appearances of the risen Christ, all fit easily into a consecutive narrative, given the sole condition that, when St. Matthew mentions the holy women, he attributes to the whole group that which belongs to Mary of Magdala alone. It is unnecessary to point out (Page 296) that it is not unusual to interpret statements in this way in all histories that are composed from various sources. Nor does such a procedure on the part of the evangelists call for any objection to be raised on the score of the dogma of inspiration; and, in any case, those who do not accept that dogma have no right to raise such an objection, in order to provide a basis for their doubts concerning the truth of a fact that is thoroughly well attested.

No ; the only real difficulty—and in truth it is one that is plain enough—is this: when the angels appeared to the holy women they appointed a meeting- place in the name of Jesus, where He was to be seen by the disciples. The place was in Galilee; but He had the intention all the time of meeting them in Jerusalem. Even if we learned this from one and the same author, we still could not absolutely say that he had contradicted himself, for there is no contradiction in the idea that Jesus was to appear in both places; but we should have to say that the author had composed his narrative in a very clumsy fashion, as though he were ignorant of what he was leading up to. But it is not the case that this apparent contradiction is found in one and the same author, although it would be the case if the whole of St. Mark’s last chapter had been written all in one piece. But here the critics render us a signal service by the way in which, with a rational comprehension of the literary problem, they have proved that St. Mark’s original work ended at the eighth verse of his last chapter. The remaining verses of that sixteenth chapter were written later by another hand, or by St. Mark’s own hand if we prefer that opinion, and contain only a summary of what is related by other evangelists. The summary is connected more or less skilfully with what precedes it and must be accepted as strictly true, since it was written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in order to complete a book that is of sacred character; but, this being the case, it ought not to be judged according to the strict laws that are applied to a work written by a single author, or composed by him as a single whole. Hence, if there be literary inconsistency between the conclusion and the rest of the gospel of Mark, that ought not to be used as an argument the consistency of the facts there narrated.

St. Mark, then, gives Galilee as the place where the disciples are to meet Christ; and, indeed, the last apparition (Page 297) narrated in his gospel ought to be put on a parallel with the last one mentioned by St. Matthew, which was certainly in Galilee. St. Matthew's narrative is altogether coherent: the meeting-place is appointed for Galilee and the appointment is there kept. St. Luke makes no mention of any appearances in Galilee, and this is quite in conformity with his plan which gives much more importance to Judea than the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Mark; moreover, he had the intention of making his narrative of the preaching of the Apostles begin from Jerusalem in the second volume he was to write, the Acts of the Apostles. It would have been a remarkable want of literary skill to have related an account of the meeting in Galilee; he therefore abstained from doing so. Will it be maintained by anyone that such an example of literary' method is tantamount to a denial that there took place any apparitions in Galilee? St. John mentions apparitions first in Jerusalem and then in Galilee; consequently he also makes no mention of the appointment of a meeting place in Galilee.

The much-repeated objection of the critics, then, comes to this: does it not seem that St. Matthew and St. Mark invent this meeting-place in Galilee appointed by the angels in order to prepare for Christ's appearance there, which js the only appearance they could mention? It was as much as to say: ' You will see Jesus again, do not doubt, in Galilee, where you followed Him and lived with Him.' We will go so far as to ask whether the most scrupulous of historians would be led to call the historicity of a fact into question if he actually met with such a literary manipulation of sources, supposing that Matthew and Mark really did act in the manner described by the objection. It would have been a completely harmless proceeding. All the same, the evangelists had no need of it; it was perfectly natural for the Apostles to go back to Galilee.

Only one other difficulty remains to be solved. Why did not St. Matthew make any mention of the apparitions at Jerusalem? Was it because he knew nothing about them? That is as good as to demand why he said nothing about the long mission of Jesus in Judea narrated by St. Luke, about Martha and Mary, about Zacchaeus the publican, and so on. The fact is that as he had put practically the whole of Christ's preaching by the shores of the lake of Galilee, he felt it necessary to put the supernatural termination of (VOL. II.- U) (Page 298) his gospel there also. Forming a link between St. Matthew the Galilean and St. Luke, who was preparing to take the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, comes St. John, who is fuller than either; he relates the apparitions at Jerusalem, those which were chiefly necessary to convince and reassure the Apostles, along with one of the apparitions in Galilee, which were intended to link their minds to the memories of the past.

Appearances of Christ in Galilee (317-318).

Jesus Appears to Seven Disciples

21 [a]After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tibe'ri-as; and he revealed himself in this way. **2** Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathan'a-el of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zeb'edee, and two others of his disciples were together. **3** Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

4 Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. **5** Jesus said to them, “Children, have you any fish?” They answered him, “No.” **6** He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. **7** That disciple whom Jesus loved[b] said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. **8** But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards[c] off.

9 When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread. **10** Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” **11** So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn. **12** Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. **13** Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. **14** This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

Jesus and Peter

15 When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Feed my lambs.” **16** A second time he said to him, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend my sheep.” **17** He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, “Do you love me?” And he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep.[d] **18** Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go.” **19** (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Jesus and the Beloved Disciple

20 Peter turned and saw following them the disciple whom Jesus loved, who had lain close to his breast at the supper and had said, “Lord, who is it that is going to betray you?” **21** When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, “Lord, what about this man?” **22** Jesus said to him, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!” **23** The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, “If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?” John 21: 1-23

The Commissioning of the Disciples

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. **17** And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. **18** And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.” Matt. 28: 16-20

15 And he said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. **16** He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. **17** And these signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; **18** they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.” Mark 16: 15-18.

St. John is said to have been totally absorbed by the splendor of the Incarnate Word during the mortal life of Jesus; yet he is the one who succeeds in bestowing a human charm even to the risen Lord who moves in an atmosphere of glory. Never had the shores of the lake of Galilee seen so pure a light as that. Jesus now possesses His supreme liberty as a being of the heavenly sphere, but at the same time He shows Himself as a father who finds his children once again, a kind master who remembers the fault only to forgive it, a friend who renews the old fishing expeditions on the lake, who reopens the former familiar converse with the assurance that now there is a mutual affection which nothing can henceforth mar. John, whom some have turned into a rival of Peter, crowns him with a halo made of a ray of glory taken from the glory of the risen Christ. The gospel ends as it began, with Simon going fishing, Simon who becomes, as Jesus has foretold, the great fisher of men, the master of preaching, and in addition the supreme shepherd on earth of the sheep whose eternal Shepherd is Christ.

They were on the shores of the lake of Tiberias: Simon, Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, and the two sons of Zebedee.

The ‘two others of His disciples,’ unnamed in the original gospel text, were John and James, thus indicated by the evangelist in his own fashion; a gloss, naming them, later crept into the text.

After days of anguish and days of joy they had to resume their ordinary occupations. Christ had given His Apostles power over the souls of men, but He had not yet given them the signal they awaited. They knew that they were to see Him again in Galilee and would not begin until (Page 299) they had seen Him. Simon Peter, therefore, said to the others: ‘I go a fishing.’ Understanding that the words contained an implied invitation, the others, who were obviously gathered around him, replied: ‘ We also come with thee.’ They set out at night as was customary; but that night they caught nothing. When morning broke they saw someone on shore standing there as though to buy fish when they reached him, but they did not recognize who it was. He cried out to them: ‘ Young men, have you any fish to eat?’ All they could reply was a ‘ No’ which betrayed their disappointment. In a confident tone the stranger called out: ‘Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you shall find.’ Weary as they were, the words seemed a good omen to the unlucky fishermen. They therefore let their net slowly down into the water while they pushed their boat offshore, and when they rowed it back dragging in the long net, the weight of the fish twisting in the meshes was so great that they could not pull the net up. At this, a flood of memories burst upon the mind of the disciple whom Jesus loved; it was after this fashion that the Master had manifested His power in those early days, before He had called them to follow Him once and for all. It could be none but He that was again working this miracle, and turning, John said to Peter: ‘It is the Lord!’

Although Peter had been slower to understand, he was quicker to act. Being naked, that is, clothed merely in a sort of shirt for the work of fishing, he quickly tied his girdle round his waist so as to prevent the garment floating on the water, and then cast himself into the water as on the former occasion; but this time his action was dictated less by natural impetuosity than by his desire to show Christ his eagerness. The other disciples, who were only about a hundred yards from the shore, did not try to haul the net up, but dragged it behind them. Near the water’s edge they leapt ashore without now troubling any more about the net, and saw with surprise a charcoal fire on which fish was being cooked, along with some bread. So their Lord had already prepared a meal for them. What was He going to do? With the simplicity of former days, without the majesty that might have been expected, without a word about the heavenly glory that now was His, Jesus said pleasantly: ‘ Bring hither of the fishes which you have now (Page 300) caught.’ This was not so easy. Peter had to board the boat again to see to the hauling up of the net, and drew it up full of a hundred and fifty-three large fishes which they had the curiosity to count, so little solemnity was there about the scene. And in spite of the great number the net was not broken, a symbol of the great number of souls that the Church can hold without loss of her unity, for she expands to receive them.

But this spiritual lesson is not what Jesus first of all had at heart. With a kindly gesture He said: ‘Come and dine.’ The disciples well knew that it was He and therefore did not think of questioning Him. And since He seemed to show no desire for their homage, the very respect they felt for Him constrained them to behave just as they had done with Him in the old days by the lake. Above all Jesus wanted them really to understand that He was just the same. As of old, He took bread and distributed it to them, then the fish. But after thus lavishing marks of His care upon these friends of His and seeing their strength was restored after they had dined ’ as the divine simplicity of the gospel text has it—Jesus meant to put a final consecration upon His work, the Church that He had founded, by what He was to do with him who was its head. Simon Peter had denied Him, yet it was to him that He had appeared before them all. He was not therefore thinking of reproaching Peter, but rather He was deigning to show that His disciple’s momentary weakness was more than forgotten; the sorrowful recollection of that fall would intensify the disciple’s love for his Master, a love already surpassing that of all the others. His remembrance of the denial was to be transfigured by a supreme testimony that he was to pay to the goodness of Christ.

Jesus now begins to speak with a solemn air: ‘ Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?’ There is a clear indication in the concluding words that, on His side, Jesus will grant to Peter more than to the others if he knows that he loves his Master more than they. But now Simon no longer dares to say anything that would lift him up above the rest, and he humbly appeals to the Master’s heart: ‘Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ Jesus replies: ‘Feed My lambs.’ His lambs are those whom He knows and who know Him, the flock whose Shepherd He on whose behalf He has laid down His life, for that is why (Page 301) He has come, as He told the Jews at Jerusalem.

15 as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.
John 10: 15

Then He says a second time: ‘Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?’ There is the same answer: ‘Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee’ ; and there is the same reward : ‘Be the shepherd of My sheep.’ Finally, for the third time, He asks: ‘Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?’; and certainly three protestations of affection were not too much to ask from the man who had thrice denied. But was Jesus alluding to the past sin? Did He then still remember it? Sadness fills Peter’s heart, as at that fatal hour when his eyes had met those sorrowful eyes. He finds support in his faith, he appeals to his Master’s divine knowledge: ‘Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.’ This time was really the last. Jesus replies; ‘ Feed My sheep.’ And now, knowing His disciple’s love and accepting it, knowing that it will lead him to give his life for the Master he adores, Jesus reveals to him in advance by what death he is to die, a death like His own: ‘ When thou wast young, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.’ They were veiled words, pointing to a torture that would be terrible to nature, but accepted out of love: they were better understood when St. John the evangelist wrote, after St. Peter had been crucified, one with his Master in death as in life. Then Jesus said to Peter alone: Follow Me.’ Peter knew what that meant: ‘ If anyone will serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there also shall My servant be.’

26 If any one serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there shall my servant be also; if any one serves me, the Father will honor him. John 12:26

Thus was Peter consecrated by Jesus as universal shepherd. To establish his authority, even over those who will also be shepherds of souls,

2 Tend the flock of God that is your charge,[a] not by constraint but willingly,[b] not for shameful gain but eagerly, I Peter 5:2

there is no need to look for the faithful in the lambs, and bishops and priests in the sheep. Lambs and sheep are almost synonymous here: both categories form part of Christ’s flock. It is this whole flock that is subject to Peter’s pastoral care. This investiture by our Savior is more explicit as regards Peter’s universal authority, but does not show its perpetuity so plainly as the words already spoken to him: ‘ Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’

17 And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter,[d] and on this rock[e] I will build my church, and the powers of death[f] shall not prevail against it.[g] **19** I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven,[h] and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” **20** Then he strictly charged the disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ. Matthew 16:17 ff

But universality and perpetuity, two (Page 302) divine attributes, are easily reconciled. They are expressed by two symbols: Peter is the unshakable rock; he is the shepherd of the whole flock. So long as he is a rock he remains a shepherd. Now this shepherd could not always be Peter himself, just as the Church cannot always be composed of the same people. The Church continually changes yet remains the same, always governed by the same shepherd; and he too is represented by fresh individuals, Perpetuity is succession through a line of rulers. So long as they are the rock, each in his turn will be the universal shepherd of all the sheep.

When Peter began to follow his Master, the disciple whom Jesus loved, himself a very close friend of Peter’s, thought he was not doing anything indiscreet in starting to follow them. Would he, then, be called to the same fate? Peter asks this out of affection, perhaps thinking that John himself would like to know, just as John had questioned the Master at the Last Supper to satisfy Peter’s own curiosity. Jesus means to keep that secret: ‘If I would have him remain till I come, what is that to thee?’ In a society like that of the early Christians, all anxiously awaiting the second coming of Christ, this question was interpreted as a declaration of fact. People had grown used to the idea that John would not die before the great advent of Christ, and they spoke of their conviction even in his presence. John himself, when he wrote or dictated his gospel, did not wish to make any alteration in Christ’s words which he set down as they were uttered; he merely noted that they must be taken in their right sense, and not made to represent as certain what Jesus had deliberately left obscure.

The narrative ends with Jesus’ departure, not by a sudden mysterious disappearance, but as if He withdraws, followed by His two friends, along those delightful shores of the lake.

St. John has the gift of rising to the loftiest thoughts without the tone of the conversation ceasing to be intimate and cordial. St. Matthew is more solemn. He, too, takes for granted the appearances at Jerusalem, since he says that the Apostles had doubted at first.

The Commissioning of the Disciples

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

Matthew 28:17

It was after they had been convinced of their Master's resurrection that they came into Galilee, to a place that He had appointed, on what occasion we do not know. Just as He had gathered them together on a mountain to hear His opening sermon, (Page 303) so on a mountain again, perhaps the same one, He gave them their mission. At the sight of Him the Eleven fell down before Him: He came as a king. When He had drawn near, He said to them: 'All power hath been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world.' The programme for the future was contained in a few lines: Preach, so as to bring forth faith in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and mark those who believe with the seal of baptism; then train them in the moral life as the Master taught it.

It seems that Mark's gospel puts another appearance to the Eleven in place of the mission here referred to. He adds details concerning the miracles that the disciples will be enabled to perform.

It was easy to say all that. But who would have ventured to Promise that it should be carried out, except He who had been invested with sovereign power, which He would condescend to use for the help of His disciples? That promise is assuredly the most extraordinary prophecy, and its fulfillment the easiest to verify; for every one of the faithful is conscious that the whole strength of the Church comes to her from the supernatural help of Christ. Her only support is in Him.

The last appearance in Jerusalem. The Ascension (319-320).

44 Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

45 Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, **46** and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations,[h] beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high."

The Ascension of Jesus

50 Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. **51** While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven.[i] **52** And they worshiped him, and[j] returned to Jerusalem with great joy, **53** and were continually in the temple blessing God.

Luke 24: 44-53

19 So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. **20** And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it. Amen. Mark 16: 19-20.

St. Paul mentions an appearance of the risen Christ to more than five hundred brethren at once, some of whom were still alive in his time.

6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 1 Corinthians 15: 6.

Of this the evangelists have said nothing at all, so true is it that they have left out events of the first importance. No doubt it happened in Galilee, for only there could so considerable a number of disciples have assembled at call. And at the same time we realize the suitability of Galilee for these manifestations of Christ. There Jesus had first and longest preached the kingdom of God, declaring that it would not be long in coming; and there He wished to show this prediction fulfilled in His own Person. (Page 304) 304 THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

But the word of God was to proceed from Sion and Jerusalem.

3
and many peoples shall come, and say:
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths."
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,

and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Isaias 2: 3; Micheas 4: 1-5.

The old center of the worship of God had become the first Church of the Christian worship by the institution of the Eucharist. It was from there that the gospel was to spread. Jesus must therefore have given His Apostles the command to return thither. It was surely at Jerusalem that Christ manifested Himself to James,

7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 1 Corinthians 15:7

whom St. Paul calls the Lord’s brother, and who is most probably the Apostle who was the son of Alphaeus, the undisputed head of the Church of Jerusalem. The evangelists have not mentioned this appearance either; it is preserved by the Gospel according to the Hebrews.

Revue biblique, 1922, p. 323

As for the last appearance of which St. Paul speaks, which was granted to all the Apostles, it can only be the one that closes the gospel according to St. Luke. If we had not yet understood that the evangelists sometimes group events without troubling to indicate intervals of time, we should have to remark it here, The author of the Acts of the Apostles, in which the interval between the Resurrection and the Ascension is given as forty days, is St. Luke; and the same St. Luke here seems to put the Ascension on the evening of Easter Sunday, without any break in continuity, immediately after the first appearance of the Apostles, he places the final instructions of Jesus to them. It is not, therefore, to harmonize two evangelists arbitrarily, it is to comply with the indications of one and the same writer that we must place an interval of time between two scenes appearing in a narrative which seems to refer to only one event.

After eating in the presence of His disciples on the evening of His resurrection, Jesus left them ; and it was at another, and a last, meeting that He reminded them of His former instructions. He had indeed told them that Christ must suffer before rising from the dead: that had been foretold by Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. At the same time He gave them understanding of the Scriptures, in order to enable these Galilean fishermen to explain them from the beginning of their preaching with more insight than the Jewish doctors of the Law. Indeed those very Scriptures had predicted that penance and the remission of sins would be preached to all nations in Christ's name, beginning with Jerusalem. Once they were enlightened with His light it (Page 305) would be their duty to solve the questions arising from their preaching. We know how serious those questions were, particularly that of the obligations of Christians in regard to the Law. Nothing was so effective as that example to show that, deprived of the presence of Jesus but helped by His Holy Spirit, the Church had the power to settle the most difficult questions of doctrine.

The time for beginning to preach had not yet come: 'As for you, stay in the city till you be endued with power from on high." These are Christ's last words in the gospel.

Then He led His disciples in the direction of Bethany. According to ancient tradition, He stopped at the place where He had taught them about the destruction of Jerusalem and His return in glory; there, on the site of the ancient basilica of the Eleona,

Jerusalem, II, ch. 14

a church in honor of the Sacred Heart is now being built with the cooperation of all nations as a prayer for peace. On that spot Christ lifted His hands and blessed His followers. Then He withdrew and they saw Him taken up to heaven. Prostrate on the ground they understood that this appearance was the last. And instead of being overwhelmed by sorrow they experienced the great joy He had promised them at the Last Supper.

22 So you have sorrow now, but I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. John 16: 22.

Where is Jesus Christ ? He is seated at the right hand of God, says St. Mark's gospel ; that is, He is associated with His Father's power. This contains a mystery for our minds; it is one of the unfathomable features of the mystery of the Incarnation. But in being invited to rejoin our Saviour, the certainty of our hope is in no way lessened by the veil of faith, which indeed will one day be drawn aside from our eyes.

To Top